

Notes from STEP's Director

Jackie Olafson, Executive Director

Within seven weeks of each other, two very special people, Deera Tychman and her son, David, passed away.

For many years this family has provided financial support to STEP.

It was Al, Deera's husband that cared so deeply for STEP. Al knew what it was like to experience hunger, so he wanted to help others not go hungry. He once told me that being hungry is something one never forgets. Al passed his passion for STEP's mission on to his family, Deera, David, and Judy.

Every December, the month of Deera's birthday, Al would call to ask the cost to feed a family during the Holidays. He would purchase 100 meals in honor of Deera. When Al passed Deera followed his tradition.

In his book, *The Holy Longings*, Ronald Rolheiser shares that the Jewish prophets made one truth central to their teaching. They taught that the quality of faith in the people depends upon the character of justice in the land –

and the character of justice in the land is to be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable groups in our society. How we stand with the poor speaks loudly of who we are here in St. Louis Park, and what we believe. The Tychman family has been a living sign of this worthy belief.

Judy and her husband, Jerel Shapiro, have established the Deera Tychman Shabbat Chicken Fund. Their donation is to ensure that each family can have a kosher chicken to celebrate the Shabbat meal.

On behalf of the many people who receive food assistance, the volunteers, and staff at STEP, we offer our condolences to Judy and Jerel Shapiro and their family. There is a strong character of justice in this family, whom we thank for honoring the poor in this community.



David and Deera Tychman (sitting)

Funding Cuts to Affect STEP

STEP recently learned that our funds for rent assistance for St. Louis Park residents will be significantly reduced effective 2014. STEP has been accessing Hennepin county homeless prevention dollars to keep people in their housing rather than become homeless. These dollars will be diverted to rehousing funds to move families out of shelter. Shelter placement is at capacity and very costly for Hennepin County. This decision, while understandable, greatly impacts STEP's ability to help residents stay in their current housing, thus, not only destabilizing families but also impacting the stability of our schools and city.

In the last fiscal year STEP assisted 76 households with rent at a cost of \$66,139, with the majority of funding coming from Hennepin county dollars. Our future challenge will be to replace these funds with private and foundation dollars in order to continue our rental assistance program.

Help Us Help Others This Holiday Season

- ◆ This year STEP will provide holiday food to 500 households.
- ◆ The average cost to feed a household of 4 is \$40.00 (this amount includes a \$15.00 gift certificate to purchase meat).

Please donate and help make a memory for a family in need!

STEP's Evening Leaders

Julie Jergens, STEP Volunteer Coordinator

STEP has some unsung hero volunteers, our Volunteer Leaders, who work month in and month out to make After Hours groups possible. These are the volunteers so many of you meet when you come to help stock and sort food or clothes.

They arrive after the staff, clients, and day volunteers have left so they rarely get to hear the praise and deep appreciation we all feel when we arrive the next day to see the craziness of the day before cleaned up and our empty shelves full again and ready for the day!

Larry Lomax, and Julie & Mark Hopkins lead the Wednesday evening groups with humor, enthusiasm and a willingness to do what ever needs doing that night. These are the people who engage your kids, the scout troop, or church group by providing a terrific volunteer



Volunteers on the evening shift help get the Clothes Closet ready for visitors.

experience. Many of you really enjoy working on their shifts and look forward to seeing them. We are so very grateful for their commitment to STEP.

Kimberly Weum, Bridget Bone, Suzie Buchosky,

and D'Anne Briggs are the wonderful Team Leaders who take weekend and special event group sessions. How lucky for STEP to have these leaders help us respond to the many requests we get for evening volunteer groups.

Larry, Julie & Mark, Bridget, Suzie and D'Anne, this month we're singing your praises!

The Meaning (continued from page 1)

"How," she wondered, "will this toy shop work with only two volunteers?"

The woman looked up when she heard the voices. She asked their names. They were not the names on her list. Puzzled, she inquired if they had talked to someone about volunteering in the toy shop. They replied they had not, but they were very interested in helping in any way they could. They went on to say, "We are returning home to Sweden at the end of the week. We have been working in Minneapolis this past year. We have a few days before our flight home, and thought we could help you out."

The woman shook her head in disbelief. Somehow a message of need was answered in a very unusual way. These angels in disguise not only saved the day, but they came to every shift to ensure others would not go without. At the end of the week they quietly returned home.

This year that lone woman will be participating in her 20th holiday season at STEP. Each holiday program she reflects on this event and the gift of good will. Season's Greetings!

STEP Toy Shop Wish List

**To help us sort toys, please attach the retail value to the item.*

Infants and Toddlers (\$15-40)

Riding toys	Baby bouncer seats
Learning toys	Disney toys
Little Tikes Toys	Large Tonka Trucks
Multicultural dolls	Sesame Street toys

Age 4-7 (\$15-40)

Sleeping Bags	Dolls
Princess toys	Craft or Activity sets
Super hero toys	Scoters
Trucks and cars	
Play sets (kitchen sets, matchbox sets)	
Dress up clothes	

Age 8-10 (\$15-40)

Remote control cars	Electronics/dance games
CD players	Bed in Bag sets
Moxi Teenz dolls	Craft kits
Pop Star music items	Legos

Age 11-18

\$10 Target gift cards (STEP gives these out instead of toys)

STEP DOES NOT NEED: stocking stuffers, holiday seasonal items, curling irons, hair dryers, makeup, toys depicting violence, balls, sleds, board games

STEP UP

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
NO. 28619

STEP

ST. LOUIS PARK EMERGENCY PROGRAM

6812 West Lake Street
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Phone: 952.925.4899
Fax: 952.925.5161
Email: info@stepslp.org
Web: stepslp.org
facebook.com/stepslp



STEP accepts donations

M, W, Th 8 AM-4 PM; Tues. 12 PM-8 PM; Fri. 8 AM-12 PM

Highlights



Over the past few months STEP has benefited from the efforts of some very creative and fun fundraising events. People played card games at the 3rd Annual Bridge Event and bid on silent auction

items at Parktoberfest for STEP. Others ate cake at a 50th birthday bash and toasted their favorite couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary all while helping our St. Louis Park neighbors in need. STEP is so thankful to be the recipient of these fundraising events. We encourage you to think of how you might turn your next celebration or monthly game night into something that helps STEP and your neighbors.

STEP received a generous grant from Target to help us purchase food for the children and families that we serve.

FIND STEP ONLINE!



FOLLOW STEP ON FACEBOOK

Get updates on needs, events and volunteer options!
www.facebook.com/STEPslp



DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at www.giveMN.org. Any amount helps!

SAVE THE DATE



EMPTY BOWLS Annual Event
March 20, 2014

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

STEP UP

A Newsletter for Volunteers, Donors and Friends of the St. Louis Park Emergency Program

Winter 2013

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The Meaning Behind the Gift

Julie Lapointe, Program Director

On a cold December night a couple strolled across the foot bridge over highway 100. The evening was crisp; the night brightly lit with stars. Unsure of their destination, they crunched through the snow. The path led them to a school building. The steps were dimly lit, but they decided to enter, pulling open the heavy door. Down the stairs they went and at the bottom was a lone woman. They said, "We came to help."

Prior to the arrival of this couple, the lone woman pondered her predicament. Tonight was the first night of a toy shop for St. Louis Park families, and there were only two people enlisted to volunteer.

The Meaning continued on Page 3



Volunteers work together to sort all incoming donations and get them ready for the annual Toy Shop. It takes more than 30 volunteers every year to make the event a success.

Improvements Ahead for Donors

Jackie Olafson, Executive Director

We appreciate every gift that is made to STEP. Your generosity keeps our doors open so that we can continue to help our neighbors in need and provide them with food, clothing, transportation, and assistance with resources.

As a result of the rising cost of postage and our commitment to devote every dollar possible to serving people who are hungry and in need of STEP's services, effective January 2014, STEP would like to email as many thank you acknowledgements as possible. We have new donation envelopes which have space for your email address. If we do not have your email address, we will continue to mail written receipts for gifts of \$100 or more. You may request a mailed receipt for gifts of any size. Beginning in January 2015, we will send all our donors an itemized annual acknowledgement of their gifts made during the previous year for tax purposes. The one exception is that we will no longer directly acknowledge gifts made through GiveMN.org as that organization sends out it's own letter of acknowledgment,

and we want to avoid duplication.

We will continue to promptly acknowledge memorial, honorary and other special occasion gifts of \$15 or more. If your special donation is less than \$15, please feel free to stop in and pick up an acknowledgement card that you can send yourself.

We hope that our donors will understand and support our decision. STEP strives to be an excellent steward of every gift, and this is one more way we can stretch your gifts further and serve more in need.

Change in the Donation Envelope

Our new donation envelopes now include:

- a place for your e mail address if you would like an email acknowledgement
- a check box if you want a U.S. mail acknowledgement for this donation

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.